



Attachment D – Cover Letter

Montana Commission on Community Service 2011 AmeriCorps State Grant Application

Proposed Project Title: ___Big Sky Watershed Corps_____

Contact Person: _____Jono McKinney or Lee Gault_____

Name of Applicant Organization: ___Montana Conservation Corps Inc._____

Address: ___206 N. Grand Ave._____

City/State/Zip: ___Bozeman, MT 59715_____

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Federal Employer Identification No (FEIN): ___81-046-7431_____

Type of Applicant (nonprofit, government, etc.): ___Non-Profit_____

Geographic Area to be Served: Communities across Montana with a focus on rural Montana

Amount of Funds Requested and Total Project Budget: ___Requesting \$133,000 out of an overall budget of \$340,422_____

Question 1: Brief description and summary of program (max 500 words) *Please use similar content to what is submitted into eGrants*: _____

The Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) cultivates and sustains healthy watershed communities through a comprehensive program of locally-driven natural resource projects. A collaborative effort between the Montana Conservation Corps, Montana Association of Conservation Districts, and the Montana Watershed Coordination Council, the BSWC will carefully recruit, train and deploy AmeriCorps members to qualifying watershed related groups and conservation districts across the state of Montana. Host sites will be selected to align with and enhance programmatic goals including, education and outreach, watershed planning and project implementation, volunteer generation and member development.

As one of four headwaters states in the Rocky Mountain region that provides drinking water for over 60 million US Citizens in 11 states, Montana is clearly in a critical forefront position to positively impact natural resource issues at a landscape scale. However, being the fourth largest and one of the least populated states in the nation presents a number of challenges.



Montana's watershed communities are rural, isolated and economically disadvantaged and they have a limited work force to face pressing environmental issues. While they may lack capacity and resources, these communities are poised to work collaboratively toward solutions that will ensure access to clean water, recreational opportunities, environmental benefits, and viable, resilient economic livelihoods. Through the provision of quality service members, the BSWC will empower local organizations to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts that could result in far-reaching benefits while bolstering the professional development and future career opportunities of young professionals that are emerging from academia.

The watershed approach is found across our nation, but Montana is emerging as a leader in putting this strategy to work in communities across the state. Placing AmeriCorps members with these cutting edge watershed related groups will aid these groups in their efforts to successfully accomplish critical projects including habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, strategies for living with wildlife, riparian protection, environmental education that connects youth with the outdoors, and more.

Issue Areas - Which federal key objective(s) and/or Montana Initiative(s) will this program address?

Federal Key Objectives:

- ☐ Education
- ☐ Healthy Futures
- ☒ Environment Stewardship
- ☐ Veterans and Military Families
- ☐ Opportunity
- ☐ Disaster Services

Montana Initiatives:

- ☐ The Governor's strategic initiative for clean energy
- X The Governor and First Lady's strategic initiative for math and science education
- ☒ Expand and Promote Volunteerism in Montana

Questions 2: Describe how your program will address these issue areas as outlined in the Federal Key Objectives and Montana Initiatives. (max 500 words) *Note: how well programs address issue areas will be used in the ranking of funding recommendations by the Grant Review Workgroup.*



The Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) cultivates and sustains healthy watershed communities through a program of locally-driven environmental stewardship, community education, volunteer mobilization, and watershed monitoring. A collaborative effort of the Montana Watershed Coordination Council, Montana Association of Conservation Districts, and Montana Conservation Corps, the BSWC will recruit, train and deploy AmeriCorps members to qualifying watershed organizations in Montana.

Much of Montana's history is speckled with tales of the depredation and despoilment of its natural treasures. Increased demands are being placed on Montana's watershed resources from increasing numbers of people. The reality is stark, 47% of all river and stream miles in the state fail to meet state standards that ensure water can be used for fisheries, agriculture and recreation.

In the 21st century, the health of Montana's economy depends increasingly on the conservation and restoration of the state's resources. Montana's watershed communities are rural, isolated and economically disadvantaged. They have a limited work force to face pressing environmental issues.

AmeriCorps members will provide direct service for watershed related groups across Montana. Through the provision of quality members, the BSWC will empower local organizations to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts while bolstering the professional development and future career opportunities of young professionals emerging from academia. Through their experiences with organizations that encourage a high level of participation, interaction and teamwork, the AmeriCorps members will benefit from an experience that enriches their educational training and promotes their continued involvement in local conservation efforts into the future

Members will provide services that align with primary programmatic goals: watershed education and outreach, watershed health and protection, volunteer engagement. In placing AmeriCorps members with watershed groups, this project enhances the ability of these organizations to engage community stakeholders in local conservation efforts. Annual accomplishments include mobilizing 750 volunteers to serve 3,000 hours of service, helping re-connecting citizens to their local watershed.

Through education and outreach activities, AmeriCorps members and their hosts can build trust and a spirit of cooperation, increase awareness, build expertise, and ultimately engage citizens as resources to address challenging environmental issues. Members will conduct education and outreach activities for 3,000 community stakeholders, particularly school students, each year. Engaging students in hands on conservation service activities in their local watersheds will not only compliment classroom science education but also begin to inform and engage Montana's youth with local watershed issues.

AmeriCorps members and their hosts will undertake watershed health and protection activities that result in data to improve decision-making and policy development. Better information should lead to better decisions and, hopefully, better actions. Each year, each AmeriCorps member will participate in the collection, interpretation and creation of data resources, documents, and/or watershed plans.

The Montana Commission on Community Service also has the following expectations of all AmeriCorps Programs:

Montana Expectations of All Programs:

- Disability inclusion in the design and delivery of the program
- A collaborative approach to program planning, design and delivery



- Demonstrated ability to successfully administer an AmeriCorps or other federal grant
- Addressing rural, underserved or areas of extreme poverty that are not currently served by AmeriCorps programs

Questions 3: Describe how your program will address these expectations (max 300 words):

The MCC has been very successful in attracting and accommodating a large number of members with self-reported disabilities. (30% in 2010). We expect this trend to continue with the BSWC. Disability inclusion will be integrated into every component of the program from ensuring a supportive atmosphere to providing training and assistance and implementing accommodations for members able to meet basic task requirements.

The BSWC itself is a collaborative effort among three statewide conservation organizations. Watershed efforts, by their very nature are collaborative efforts engaging many stakeholders. To develop this program, we have solicited feedback from a myriad of watershed related groups, assessing their needs, current resources and what additional resources would be most useful to them. In managing the BSWC, the three partners will form a steering committee to oversee all facets of the program, maintaining and strengthening our own collaboration.

MCC will lead the administration of the BSWC. MCC has effectively administered AmeriCorps grant funds for over sixteen years and has a proven record of success. A rigorous review of financial statements is conducted annually and the findings of OIG audits have underscored the proficiency of MCC's grant administration practices.

Operating within the fourth largest and one of the least populated states in the nation, Montana's watershed communities are rural, isolated and economically disadvantaged. They have a limited workforce to face pressing environmental issues. Close to 86% of the state (48 out of 56 counties) is rural according to the Beale Codes. The 58 conservation districts and 50+ watershed groups span the state so members can be placed anywhere there is a need. Special efforts are being made to identify funding to help support the placement of members with groups that do not have the resources to support a member on their own.

Indirect Cost Rate:

Applicants that include a federally-approved indirect cost rate amount in their budget must submit the approved indirect cost rate agreement to the Governor's Office of Community Service. N/A

**Please attach the indirect cost rate agreement.*



AmeriCorps Members

How many Members will be recruited under the proposed program?

10 Full Time
(1700 hrs)

 Half Time
(900 hrs)

 Reduced Half Time
(675 hrs)

 Quarter Time Minimum Time
(450 hrs) (300 hours)

10 Total

Continuation Applicants Only:

Give a summary of the successes and highlights of your program in the last year. Please consider using information from your progress reports. (max 500 words)

This is a new program being submitted by the MCC so there are no previous successes or highlights for the BSWC.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to reviewing your proposal!

Please submit a completed cover letter (attachment D) to the Governor's Office of Community Service by November 3, 2010 at 5pm in order to be eligible for a 2011 AmeriCorps Grant. This is in conjunction to the full application submitted in eGrants by November 3, 2010 at 5pm.

